

**Thomas Gardner**  
**Uttoxeter's Forgotten Georgian Architect and Builder**  
**(1737-1804)**

Jim Foley 2020



**Bank House Church Street built by Thomas Gardner and Thomas Freeman circa 1776-77. Bank House is very similar to Joseph Pickford's house in Friarsgate, Derby. The house on the right is a much later addition. Photo John Walker.**

Thomas Gardner was an architect and builder in Uttoxeter circa 1772-1804. His most impressive house in Uttoxeter beyond question is Bank House in Church Street which he built in 1776-77 for Thomas Hart Uttoxeter's first banker. The house was built during Gardner's partnership with Thomas Freeman a Derby builder. It is a listed building with the details saying it from the late 1700s.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1374326>

While researching the life and work of Thomas Gardner I was surprised at the number and variety of building projects he was involved in. He obviously had a good reputation with the nobility and entrepreneurs alike as he was commissioned time and again by a number of them on projects requiring some architectural expertise.

The information below on Thomas Gardner has been drawn from a number of sources including A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects 1600-1840 by Howard Colvin published in 1978, Joseph Pickford of Derby A Georgian Architect by Edward Saunders 1993, an article by Edward Saunders on Doveridge Hall in the Derbyshire Life Magazine of November 1972, the British Newspaper Archive, the Life of Josiah Wedgwood from his private correspondence by Elizabeth Meteyard, My Own Story by Mary Howitt nee Botham and a number of sources found online which are given at the end of this document.

It is important to make it clear that Thomas Gardner the architect was not related to the Gardner family of Lord Gardner fame who lived at Lord Gardner's House or Uttoxeter House on High Street which was mistakenly called Manor House and the name has remained.

The more I researched Thomas Gardner the more impressed I became at the number of building projects he was involved in, the breadth of his architectural knowledge and his competence as a builder of some renown. Undoubtedly he was a good administrator having in many cases to design buildings and organise a workforce many miles from his base in Uttoxeter. He must have had a good constitution to regularly travel up to 50 miles on horseback to and from his many projects.

Thomas Gardner 1737-1804 was born in Leicestershire. By trade he a carpenter and his ancestors in Leicestershire had been carpenters and farmers for at least a century. In 1763-64 at the age of 27 he was in Derby working for 2s a day as an architect builder for Joseph Pickford on the Derby Assembly Rooms (Saunders).

Joseph Pickford had started as an apprentice stone mason in London under his uncle Joseph Pickford who enjoyed the confidence of the leading London architects of the day and was awarded some prestigious contracts including building the Horse Guards in Whitehall, London. In 1760 Joseph Pickford the nephew was in Derby where within a short time he had picked up some lucrative contracts including the building of the Derby Assembly Rooms mentioned above. There were thirty-three masons, bricklayers and joiners working for Pickford on the project.

Joseph Pickford must have been impressed by Thomas Gardner's work as when the Derby Assembly Rooms were completed he made Gardner his assistant and regularly left him to carry on with contracts in his absence.

Edward Saunders wrote that Thomas Gardner worked for Pickford for nearly ten years and probably from 1763 to 1772. Seven of those years would probably have been as an apprentice. He would have had plenty of opportunity to learn from the master craftsman and to develop and hone his own architectural talents and building skills. In Staffordshire Thomas Gardner worked for Pickford on the building of Etruria Hall commissioned by Joshua Wedgwood 1768-1770 and on Sandon Hall commissioned by Lord Archibald Hamilton 1770-1771. Soon after the work on Sandon Hall was finished Lord Hamilton sold it to Nathaniel Ryder whose son Dudley Ryder became the first Earl of Harrowby. It was rebuilt by architect Samuel Wyatt and transformed into a Georgian House. In 1847 it was badly damaged by fire and had to be rebuilt. In 2020 Sandon Hall is still the ancestral home of the Earl of Harrowby.

Through his work with Joseph Pickford there is no doubt that Thomas Gardner became well known and respected as an architect and builder locally and in the Midlands. Josiah Wedgwood in March 1776 in a letter to his friend Thomas Bentley mentions that Gardner is finishing off some work and some buildings for him. In 1777 Wedgwood mentioned in a letter that he had spoken to Gardner concerning using his designs for chimney pieces in gentlemen's houses. (Meteyard).

In his article in the Derbyshire Life Edward Saunders wrote that in 1772 after the death of his father Thomas Gardner had sufficient capital to set up in partnership with Thomas Freeman

a builder of Derby. I have not yet found any evidence to confirm 1772 as the year when Gardner left the employ of Joseph Pickford and set up his own business in Uttoxeter.

On December 26, 1774 Thomas Gardner aged 37 married Mary Maxwell a widow at St John the Baptist Church Stanford Upon Soar, Nottingham. He gave his place of residence as the Parish of Doveridge just across the River Dove in Derbyshire and just a couple of miles from Uttoxeter. Mary Howitt, nee Botham in her biography said Thomas Gardner's wife was the widow of an officer in the East India Company. This was possibly William Maxwell who married Mary Thornton on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1843 at St Mary's Parish Church Nottingham. They had a son William George Maxwell possibly baptised on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 1745 at Nottingham. She was it seems a rich widow and one wonders if the marriage helped Mr Gardner to set up on his own.

In 1776 Thomas Gardner advertised that he was in partnership in Uttoxeter with Thomas Freeman a builder of Derby in advertisement in the Derby Mercury of March 7<sup>th</sup> 1776.

"Messrs. Gardner and Freeman take this method of informing their friends that they undertake every branch of the building business both at Uttoxeter and Derby where they constantly keep all materials, workmen & c. for masonry, joiners work &c and every part of the building business. Those who please to favor them with their commands may depend on the most punctual attention to their business and upon the most equitable and reasonable terms. Letters will be duly answered and gentleman waited upon.

N.B. Plans, surveying and measuring – all sorts of chimney pieces, from plain stone to foreign marble; plain or richly ornamented – monuments of all sorts, & c. & c. & c.

Uttoxeter March 7, 1776."

The partnership doesn't seem to have lasted very long for it was mutually dissolved on March 25<sup>th</sup> of that same year. An N.B. at the bottom of an advert of December 7, 1776 reveals that Thomas Gardner's building premises in Uttoxeter were in Balance Street and were leased by him. They must have been quite large to keep all the requirements needed in the building business and to provide workshops for his joiners.

"To be Let at a small rent, the remainder of a lease of a yard and building convenient for business that requires room, situated in Balance Street, Uttoxeter. Enquire of Thomas Gardner Uttoxeter Dec. 7, 1776."

Sometime after this that he built a house for himself in Balance Street and moved into it in 1789.

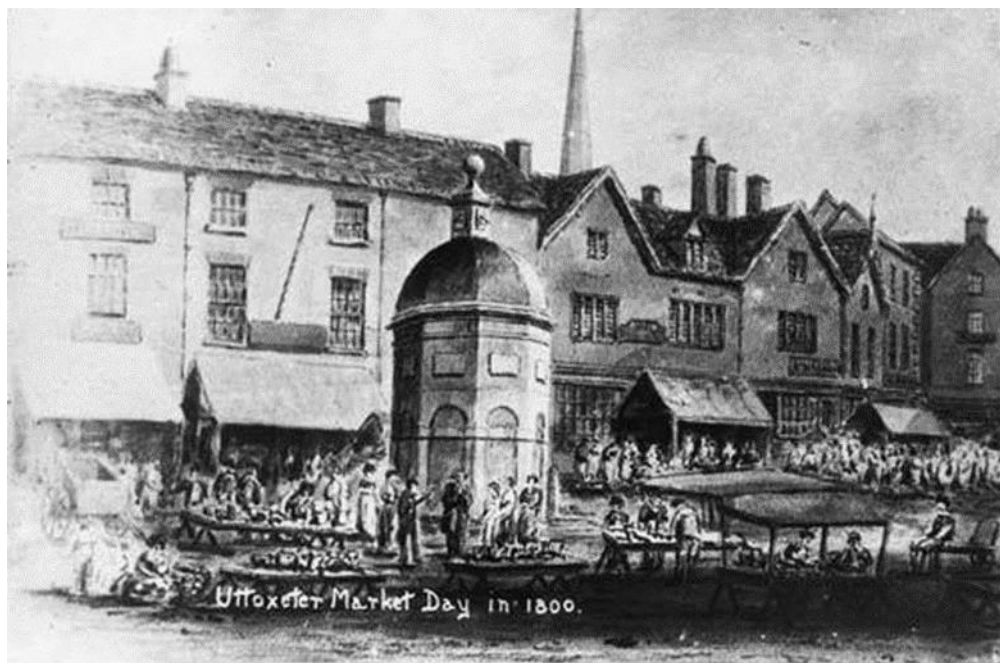
In a notification in the Derby Mercury of Friday 3 January 1777 of the ending their partnership Thomas Gardner and Thomas Freeman state that they will continue to work together on two local building projects one at Doveridge for Sir Henry Cavendish and the other in Uttoxeter for Mr Thomas Hart. This gives us the year Bank House in Church Street was build. Gardner is in Uttoxeter and Freeman is in Derby.

In 1777 John Edensor Heathcote, who was doing extensive repairs to Longton Hall, was employing Thomas Gardner as his architect and was planning to install a Wedgwood fireplace there. Wedgwood mentions this in a letter to William Bentley.

Mr. Heathcote, you know he (writes to Bentley) is repairing Longton Hall in our neighbourhood, & he wishes to have one of our chimneypieces, but when I came to talk with Gardner, his architect, I find Mr. Heathcote's idea is to have our jaspers set in a wood freese & tablet. I have convinc'd Mr. G. of the impropriety of this combination, & am to undertake the same with Mr. H. I told Mr. G. we were making some metopes, tablets, oval bas-reliefs for frieses, blocks &c. for wood chimney-pieces, glass frames &c. & show'd him some samples which he approv'd of very much, & did not doubt but great quantitys would be sold to compose chimney-pieces of 10 to 15 guineas price which, he said, were the chief run in all country gentlemen's houses & he would put some of them up in chimney-pieces he had now in hand as soon as I could furnish him with them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wedgwood to Bentley, December 17, 1777.

Francis Redfern in his history of Uttoxeter recorded that a water conduit was erected in the Market Place in 1780 by a Mr Gardner misspelt by Redfern or his printer as Garner. The conduit was demolished circa 1850 and replaced with the Samuel Johnson Memorial and a weighing machine designed by Uttoxeter architect Thomas Fradgley. It is now commonly called The Kiosk.



The Conduit Market Place Uttoxeter in 1800. Francis Redfern wrote that the conduit was built by Thomas Gardner in 1780. Waiting for permission to use this print.

Joseph Pickford died in July 1782 after a short illness at the early age of 45. Thomas Gardner took on many of Pickford's old workmen. (Saunders). Having worked with them for ten years he would have well known their craftsmanship and would have valued their experience. He would also have known all Pickford's subcontractors and suppliers and made use of them for his own projects including sculptor George Moneyppenny who made and designed monuments and memorials.

The first link below takes you to a resume of the life of Joseph Pickford on the Etruria Factory Archive. The second link takes you to the script of a very interesting lecture on the life of Joseph Pickford by Maxwell Craven. Other links to Joseph Pickford appear at the end of this document.

<http://www.wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk/archives/archive-collections-/story/the-etruria-factory-archive/chapter/joseph-pickford-1734-82>

THE 'CELEBRATED AND INGENIOUS MR JOSEPH PICKFORD' a lecture by Maxwell Craven 2014.  
[http://derbycivicsociety.co.uk/doc/PICKFORD\\_LECTURE\\_4\\_2014.pdf](http://derbycivicsociety.co.uk/doc/PICKFORD_LECTURE_4_2014.pdf)

In 1789 Thomas Gardner was awarded the contract for the rebuilding of Uttoxeter Union Workhouse on The Heath. Francis Redfern in his History of Uttoxeter wrote that he had a large round sandstone in his backyard with the following inscription.

"This workhouse was rebuilt by the trustees for enclosing the common (The Heath Common) within the constablewick of Uttoxeter 1789. Thomas Garner (Gardner), builder."

Francis Redfern lived in the cottage in Carter Street which is now Redfern's Cottage the Museum of Uttoxeter Life previously called Uttoxeter Heritage Centre.

In the Derby Mercury of March 10, 1789 Thomas Gardner advertised that he was moving to his own house in the Balance Street Uttoxeter "where he proposes continuing the BUILDING BUSINESS in all its branches, making Designs, Estimates, Surveying &c. &c. and shall be obliged for future Commands." This is 53 Balance Street the house now called Leighton House which was built by Thomas Gardner for his own use.

The second part of the advert reveals that Gardner had been renting a house in Uttoxeter and is advertised to let but the description unfortunately doesn't tell us which house it was or where it was. It sounds very much like Uttoxeter House now Manor House at the top end of High Street but as yet I have not found any evidence to confirm this.

**"A house in the possession of Mr. Thomas Gardner, situate in a pleasant part of the Town of Uttoxeter, with a good garden and orchard enclosed with a brick wall, with stables, coach-houses, and other convenient out-buildings, and quantity of land, not exceeding 19 acres, near 5 acres of which lie contiguous to the said building; the other part very near and convenient.**

**Letting Advert for the house Thomas Gardner had rented in Uttoxeter.**

**N.B. The roof of the house is flat and covered with lead and commands the pleasing prospect of the River Dove for many miles." Derby Mercury 05 March 1789.**



### Thomas Gardner's own house 53 Balance Street Uttoxeter.



Leighton House 53 Balance Street Uttoxeter built by Thomas Gardner for his own use. The two storey building No 55 and the coach house attached were later additions. He moved here in 1789 and lived there for fifteen years until his death in 1804. A more appropriate name for the house would be Thomas Gardner's house. Perhaps one day a blue plaque will recognise this forgotten local architect and builder. The house on the right, gable end to the street, now called Howitt Place, was once the home of the Botham family who were neighbours of Mr Gardner and his wife. Mary Botham went on to achieve fame as Mary Howitt the writer. Leighton House seems to have been the name given to it by a member of the Bamford family who later lived here naming it after the nearby Bamford Leighton Iron Works factory. Photo John Germain estate agents.

It is a listed building with the details saying it from the late 1700s.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1374303>

We can get some idea of the size of Thomas Gardner's house from an advert in the Staffordshire Advertiser of 17 November 1832 when the house was put up for auction at The White Hart Inn. The advert confirms that the house had been built by Mr Gardner, one of the most eminent architects of the day, for his own occupation.

"Lot 1 All that substantial and well-built Messuage or Dwelling-House situate and being in Balance Street, in Uttoxeter, the residence of Mr Hawthorn, Surgeon, with a walled garden, planted with the choicest fruit trees, and pleasure grounds lying behind the same to the south aspect; a convenient Surgery, with store room over, a spacious room adjoining, (well calculated for an Attorney's Offices), corn chamber, mangle room, piggery, saddle house, and stabling for two horses with loft over the same.

The house consists of an extensive hall, 23ft. by 8, dining room 19 ft. by 17, drawing room 17 ft. by 15, and breakfast room 12 ft. by 11, excellent kitchen, back kitchen, butler's pantry, Brewhouse, wash-house, with hard and soft water pumps, and commodious arched cellars; on the first floor are four airy and highly finished lodging rooms with closets and on the second floor are three servants' rooms; the whole in most complete repairs, and it for the immediate reception of a genteel family.

N.B. The building on Lot 1 was erected by, and under the immediate direction of the late Mr Gardiner, one of the most eminent architects of the day, and for his own occupation, consequently any further comments as to its conveniences, is considered superfluous."

The Botham family lived in the house now known as Howitt Place at 57 Balance Street the next house on the right of Leighton House. In her biography *My Own Story* Auto-biography of a Child published in 1843 Mary Howitt, nee Botham described their neighbour, a builder's widow, on the left hand side. Mary often used pseudo names to hide the identities of people in her books and here she gives Mrs Gardner the name Carpenter. Mary would have been six or seven at the time.

"On the left of us stood a handsome house, which belonged to and was inhabited by, a Mrs Carpenter, the widow of a considerable builder in the place. She was a very proud and stately lady, and had it was said, great connections in London. Before she married Mr Carpenter she was the widow of an officer in the East India Service; she had been abroad and had much property. There was, according to our childish notions, something quite grand about her house; it was tall and handsome, with lofty windows, and a large door, and a vast many offices about it, which however were in her days rather old and tumble-down. But the lady lived in the grand house, and we used to see her driving out in her heavy, lumbering coach, or else walking with a very dignified air in her large handsome garden, which adjoined ours, with a huge black calash on her head, and clogs on her feet." Mrs Carpenter is of course a pseudo name for Mrs Gardner who fell out with Mrs Botham when she put her washing out to dry on a day when Mrs Carpenter was expecting guests. From that day forth they were on cold terms."

You can read this story on page 15 in her the book on the Internet Archive.

<https://ia800702.us.archive.org/28/items/myownstoryoraut00howigoog/myownstoryoraut00howigoog.pdf>

Thomas Gardner died on 8 October 1804 aged 67 and is commemorated by a tablet in the Parish Church of St Mary erected by his wife Mary. Photo below by Diane Heath.



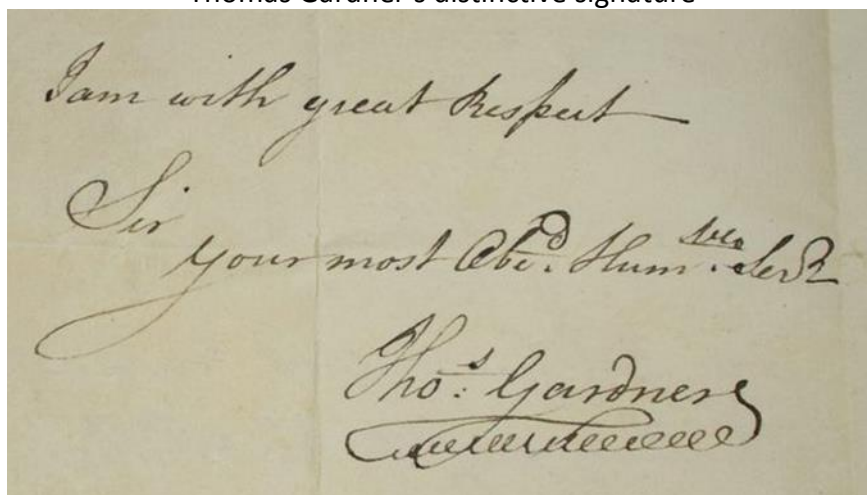
Sacred to the memory of  
*Mr. THOS. GARDNER, ARCHITECT*  
who departed this life Oct. the 8<sup>th</sup> 1804  
*Aged 67*

Whose integrity as a man and worth  
as a friend are testified by the esteem and  
regard of those who knew him.  
This tablet on which her affection and  
gratitude are with truth inscribed is  
erected by his widow Mary Gardner.

In January 1805 Mrs Gardner advertised that the yard and workshops of her late husband in Balance Street were to be let. "The premises belonging to the late Mr GARDNER, Architect and Builder, situated in the Balance Street, Uttoxeter, consisting of a large convenient Yard, large Workshops, Drying Kiln, Saw Pit, and every Requisite for carrying on the Building Business, or may be converted to various other purposes."

Mary Gardner didn't live for long after her husband's death and died after a short illness while on a visit to London on September 1st 1806. Her body was returned to Uttoxeter where it was buried in the family crypt. Mrs Gardner's son William George Maxwell had a tablet erected in the church in his mother's memory. Thomas Gardner's wife had been a widow with one son when he married her. The memorials to Thomas Gardner and his wife have been attributed to George Money Penny one of the people he worked with during his career.

Thomas Gardner's distinctive signature

A photograph of a handwritten letter on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script. The first line reads "I am with great respect". The second line begins with "Sir" followed by "Your most Obedt. Hum. Servt". The signature "Thos. Gardner" is written in a large, stylized cursive at the bottom right, with a decorative flourish underneath. There is a small mark above the "t" in "Servt" that looks like "the".

In 1790 one of Thomas Gardner's employees Richard Wilson advertised that he was setting himself up as a builder and maltster having quitted his employment with him on 23rd November 1790. "He begs leave to inform the Public that he carries on the BUILDING BUSINESS in all its branches; likewise, draws PLANS and makes ESTIMATES for buildings in the neatest and most accurate manner, and SURVEYS buildings on the lowest Terms. Uttoxeter 14th Dec. 1790." Derby Mercury - Thursday 16 December 1790. BNA.

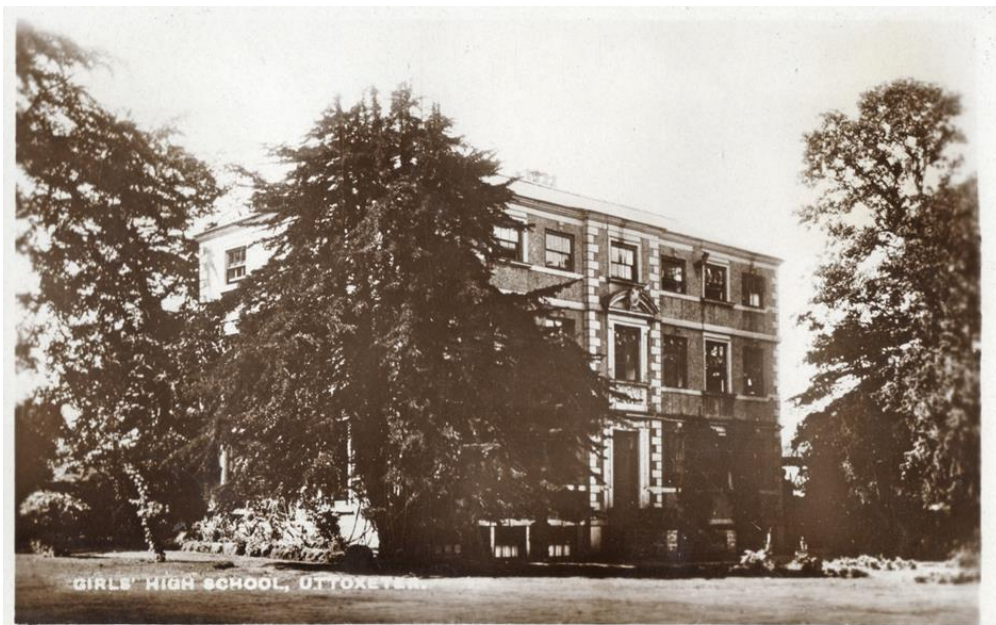


In 1806 William Lees of Alvaston, near Derby, Clerk and Draftsman to the late Mr. Gardner Architect and Builder at Uttoxeter advertised that he “intends carrying on the above business in all its branches and those who please to favour him with their orders may depend on having them duly attended to and punctually executed. N.B. Also surveys, measures and values Buildings.” Staffordshire Advertiser - Saturday 08 March 1806.

### **Buildings and building work in Uttoxeter by Thomas Gardner.**

1. Bank House Church Street House opposite St Mary's Parish Church built in partnership with Thomas Freeman circa 1776-77.
2. Conduit in Market Place circa 1780 demolished c 1850 and replaced with Johnson Memorial and weighing machine by architect Thomas Fradgley
3. The old Uttoxeter Parish Workhouse on The Heath in 1789. Redfern page 70 quoted the wording on a large round sandstone in his backyard in Carter Street the present Museum of Uttoxeter Life.
4. 55 Balance Street pre 1789.
5. The Hall, Dove Bank built circa 1795-96. Architect unknown. Could be the work of Gardner.

Before we leave Uttoxeter I must mention the property once known as The Hall on Dovebank and now part of Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter. An advertisement of 1796 when it was for sale says it was recently built. In 1798 it was owned by Anthony Rhudde. The architect who designed and built The Hall is not known but it could well have been Thomas Gardner who we know lived in Uttoxeter at that time and had a good reputation as an architect and builder. It is an impressive Georgian building.



**The Hall Dovebank Uttoxeter possibly designed and built by Thomas Gardner circa 1796 and perhpas commissioned by Anthony Rhudde.**

After his mother's death William George Maxwell Thomas Gardner's stepson stood to inherit his house and all his wealth. We may never know what happened to Gardner's account books or even when his house was sold. As more indexes are posted online we may be able to find out more about Gardner's work. If his stepson was married and had children there might be some unseen family heirlooms.

### **Alterations on properties in Staffordshire by Thomas Gardner.**

1. Longton Hall 1777. Extensive alterations for J.E. Heathcote. Source Meteyard.
2. Wigginton Church 1777. Attributed to Gardner by Edward Saunders.
3. Thorpe Constantine Church rebuilt except tower 1778. Attributed to Gardner by Edward Saunders.
4. Thorpe Constantine Hall remodelled for William Inge 1799
5. Farley Hall 1782. Altered and refronted for Charles Bill. Source Staffordshire Record Office.
6. Rolleston Hall. Alterations for Sir Oswald Mosley, Bart. 1785. Mosley Family Memoirs 1849.

### **Alterations to properties in Derbyshire by Thomas Gardner**

1. 1777 Doveridge Hall, Derbyshire for Sir Henry Cavendish, Bart. Thomas Gardner with Thomas Freeman Derby builder, circa 1777. Sources: Derby Mercury British Newspaper Archive.  
Derbyshire Historic Environment Record Monument record MDR784.  
Garnett, Oliver, Sudbury Hall, Derbyshire, National Trust Guide Book (London, 1998),  
Designed by Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter in 1787: Garnett, op. cit., p. 31.

“Doveridge Hall, now demolished was built in 1770 by Edward Stevens for Sir Henry Cavendish and set in a fine park stretching down to the Dove. The pavilions and wings were added 6 years later. The house was demolished in 1934.

Sometime after 1766, Henry Cavendish commissioned the building of a house on the site, with Edward Stevens leading the construction, and a partnership of Thomas Gardner (an architect builder of Uttoxeter) and Thomas Freeman (an architect builder of Derby) employed in 1776 to add to the construction. The house was completed the designs were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1771. When Henry Cavendish died in 1776 and was succeeded by his son Henry, Gardner and Freeman's partnership dissolved and the stable block was partially finished, simpler in appearance to the rest of the Hall. It is possible that Stevens built the original house without the wings, which are also unlike the work of Gardner, so they may be much later additions.”

2. 1786 Church Gresley Church repairs. Derbyshire Record Office Gardner Bill.
3. 1787 Sudbury Hall built and designed two lodged for the 1st Lord Vernon, 1787.  
Derbyshire County Record Office information Edward Saunders.



Located to the north of Sudbury Hall are two gate lodges. Dating to 1787, the lodges are believed to be the work of the Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter. Constructed of red brick with ashlar dressings, the lodges feature a central projecting pedimented bay with rusticated arched entrance. The almost identical pair of lodges are Grade II Listed.

Source: Photo and caption from A Historical Hiatus by MUSHUSB <https://ahistoricalhiatus.com/2014/10/>

National Trust Walking Trail online description as South Lodge sitting on the boundary between Sudbury Hall and the Sudbury village and designed and built by Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter in 1787. It is paired by the later North Lodge. Amazingly both these lodges were occupied by families right up until the 1920s.

6. Willersley Castle works for Richard Arkwright c1792-5 Thomas Gardner reconstructed main building after fire 1791, designed stables and entrance gates.

### Willersley Castle in Derbyshire

Willersley Castle at Cromford in Derbyshire was built by William Thomas in 1789 - 90 for Richard Arkwright the cotton spinning entrepreneur who had earlier established his mills both at Cromford and along the Derwent Valley.

Arkwright died before he could move in. It was an ambitious seven bay stone structure of two and a half storeys with lower side wings fronting the sheer face of the cliff across the sloping lawn and across the river - a striking sight from Cromford Hill opposite. The house is entirely classical in conception, but romanticized by battlements and by semicircular turrets flanking the broad centre and smaller circular turrets at the angles of the wing.

The interior was burnt out in 1791 and redone by Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter. The finest room is an oval hall with galleries on both upper storeys, a doomed skylight, and plasterwork.

The Wesley Guild purchased the Castle in 1928 and opened for business on 28th May 1929. The company now trades under the name Christian Guild Holidays and has celebrated 75 years as a Guild Hotel and Conference Centre.

[http://www.derbyshireuk.net/willersley\\_castle.html](http://www.derbyshireuk.net/willersley_castle.html)



**Willersley Castle, Cromford, Derbyshire. Restoration after fire by Thomas Gardner 1792**

Willersley Castle online research paper 2011 produced by Barry Joyce and Doreen Buxton with the assistance of David Hool for the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage.

C1791/2 The period during which it is assumed Thomas Gardner is appointed to deal with the fire damage at the Castle and to oversee its refurbishment. He was also at some point commissioned to design the entrance lodge, gates and stables.<sup>12</sup>

1793. The date of a set of drawings by Thomas Gardner. "Plan of Alterations at Willersley". The principal alteration shown on Gardner's plans, the creation of a new grand staircase rising within the space designed by Thomas as a study, was not implemented

1794 -1795 Thomas Gardner completes the interior of the Castle. He also is engaged during this period on the design and construction of, the lodge, lodge gates and piers, stables and overseeing completion of the chapel<sup>14</sup>.

[https://www.derwentvalleymills.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/History\\_Research\\_WillersleyCastle.pdf](https://www.derwentvalleymills.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/History_Research_WillersleyCastle.pdf)





Gatepost to Lodge Willersley Castle. Photo Barry Joyce



Entrance Lodge Willersley Castle.

Photos Barry Joyce



The coach house, stables and mews block.

Additional reading for Willersley Castle.

Landed Families of Britain and Ireland Arkwright of Willersley Castle and Hatton House

<https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2015/07/175-arkwright-of-willersley-castle-and.html>

Wirksworth Parish Records: Willersley Castle <http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/x106.htm>

Willersley Castle for sale was Methodist Holiday Hotel 2020

<https://www.countrylife.co.uk/property/a-castle-that-might-just-pay-for-itself-has-come-to-the-market-in-one-of-englands-most-beautiful-areas-217901>

Mike Higginbotham's blog <https://www.mikehigginbottominterestingtimes.co.uk/?p=7898>

RIBA Library Catalogue entry for Willersley Castle with mention of Thomas Gardner.



**Willersley: an Adam castle in Derbyshire**

Georgian Group journal

<b>Title:</b>	Willersley: an Adam castle in Derbyshire.
<b>Author statement:</b>	Article by Maxwell Craven
<b>Journal title:</b>	<a href="#">Georgian Group journal</a>
<b>Citation:</b>	vol. 22, 2014, p. 109-122.
<b>Illustrations:</b>	Includes photos, plans, illustrations, portraits
<b>Language/summaries:</b>	Text in English.
<b>References:</b>	Includes references
<b>Contents:</b>	On the 1786-92 house designed for Richard Arkwright, cotton manufacturer and pioneer (architect: William Thomas). The house was designed very much in the manner of Adam, so much so that it is possible that Arkwright consulted Robert Adam himself. Compares it to Adam's designs for Dalquharran Castle in Ayrshire. The house was damaged by fire in 1791 just before its completion, and was finished by local architect Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter.
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Houses: country: Great Britain: England: Derbyshire: Willersley Castle</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Architects: Great Britain: Adam, Robert</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Georgian architecture: Great Britain: late 18th century</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Gothic Revival: Great Britain: late 18th century</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Houses: country: Great Britain: Scotland: Ayrshire: Dalquharran Castle</a>
<b>Subject:</b>	<a href="#">Houses: country: Great Britain: Scotland: Ayrshire: Dalquharran Castle</a>
<b>Designer/Person subj:</b>	<a href="#">Adam, Robert, 1728-1792</a>
<b>Designer/Person subj:</b>	<a href="#">Thomas, William, 1739-1800</a>
<b>Designer/Person subj:</b>	<a href="#">Gardner, Thomas, 1737-1804</a>
<b>Author:</b>	<a href="#">Craven, Maxwell</a>

In an email Barry Joyce told me that the Gardner architectural drawings for Willersley Castle are held in the Arkwright Society archive at the Derbyshire Record Office ref D7573. They were in Willersley Castle until passed to the Arkwright Society late in the 20th century. Barry suggested another possible Gardner involvement at Wirksworth Hall saying that if Gardner designed the gate piers at Willersley Castle he almost certainly also designed the gate piers for the coach house and stables in Coldwell Street opposite where Wirksworth Hall stood , as they are pretty much identical. The coach house and stable buildings were much mucked around with when the alignment of Coldwell Street was modified in the 1960s and one pier was probably lost.

7. 1792 The Church of St Mary, Mill Road, Cromford, Derbyshire. Designed by Thomas Gardner. <https://her.derbyshire.gov.uk/Designation/DDR4092>

Photos below of church from Jonathan Calder's blog.



Photos from Jonathan Calder's Blog

<http://liberalengland.blogspot.com/2020/02/inside-st-marys-cromford.html>

The church's Listing on the Historic England site gives its history:

The church was begun in 1792 for Richard Arkwright's industrial complex and residence at Cromford, and was prominently sited next to the cotton mill and River Derwent. It was designed by Thomas Gardner (c1737-1804), architect and builder of Uttoxeter, who was also employed on the reconstruction of Arkwright's Willersley Castle. The wide proportions of the nave are characteristic of the period, and

Gardner's church probably had a small chancel of the kind that had become deeply unfashionable by the 1850s.

The church was substantially rebuilt in 1858 by H.I. Stevens (1806-73), architect of Derby who built many churches in the East Midlands. Stevens enlarged the chancel, remodelled windows and added the tower and west narthex. The ambitious scheme of wall paintings and stained glass was undertaken by Alfred Octavius Hemming (d 1907), who had previously worked for Clayton & Bell and had completed a similar extensive mural scheme at Folkestone, Kent. The scheme at Cromford was completed in 1897 on the centenary of the church.

The wall paintings were damaged by water over years and underwent a serious restoration in 2002.

## Building work by Thomas Gardner in other counties

1. In 1785 Designs/drawings for alterations and additions to Meriden Hall, Meriden, Warwickshire for Hon. Wriothesley Digby. Source The RIBA Library Catalogue.

Alterations and additions were carried out by Thomas Gardner for Hon. Wriothesley Digby's son including landscaping of the grounds and the addition of a service wing. The drawings appear to be an unexecuted design for the expansion of the rear facade into 5-bays dating from the time of Gardner's additions and include a collection of designs for garden structures and outbuildings including a bridge, cold frames, a flagpole and cattle sheds with a collection of survey drawings and designs for the addition or alteration of chimneypieces in the drawing and dining rooms, complete with a list of dimensions for the chimneypieces.

RIBA Library Catalogue entry for Meriden Hall with mention of Thomas Gardner.

[Catalogue Record](#) [Location in RIBA Library](#)

### Designs for alterations and additions to Meriden Hall, Meriden, Warwickshire

Unidentified 18th century English draughtsman

Personal name:	<a href="#">Unidentified 18th century English draughtsman</a>
Person added name:	<a href="#">Gardner, Thomas, 1737-1804</a>
Person added name:	<a href="#">Smith, Francis, of Warwick, 1672-1738</a>
Title:	Designs for alterations and additions to Meriden Hall, Meriden, Warwickshire,
Date:	ca. 1785
Physical description:	9 sheets
Medium:	Pen and ink
Purpose and stage:	Designs for alterations to the chimneypieces of the dining Room and drawing Room.
Aspect:	Plans and elevations.
General note:	The original house was designed by Francis Smith of Warwick for Martin Baldwin. An attic storey was latter added, by William and David Hiorn, c.1757-8 for the Hon. Wriothesley Digby. In 1785 alterations and additions were carried out by Thomas Gardner for Digby's son. Alterations included landscaping of the grounds and the addition of a service wing. This is a collection of survey drawings and designs for the addition or alteration of chimneypieces in the drawing and dining rooms, complete with a list of dimensions for the chimneypieces.
Subject:	<a href="#">Houses: country: Great Britain: England: Warwickshire: Meriden Hall</a>
Call/Ref. no.:	SC119/11 (1-9)
Provenance:	<a href="#">Purchased, 1984</a>

[http://riba.sirsidynix.net.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=HQFPNKfwDL/MAIN\\_CAT/X/9](http://riba.sirsidynix.net.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=HQFPNKfwDL/MAIN_CAT/X/9)

RIBA Architecture Image Library. Set of drawings for alterations to Meriden Hall including fireplaces probably by Thomas Gardner.

<https://www.architecture.com/image-library/ribapix/image-information/poster/designs-for-alterations-and-additions-to-meriden-hall-meriden-warwickshire-partial-floor-plans-and-elevations-of-the-existing-and-the-proposed-south-front/posterid/RIBA68341.html>



2. In 1788 Lord Wentworth Kirkby Mallory House, Leicestershire. Thomas Gardner architect and builder of Uttoxeter was appointed to carry out alterations at Kirkby Mallory House.

Bodleian Library special collections Papers of the Noel, Byron and Lovelace families.

### A.3 Correspondence of Thomas Noel (1745-1815), 2nd Viscount Wentworth

#### Biographical History:

Thomas Noel was married in 1788 to Mary, Dowager Countess Ligonier. He was the brother of Judith Milbanke, who inherited his estate at Kirkby Mallory in Leicestershire in 1815. Under the terms of the inheritance, Judith and her husband, Ralph Milbanke took the name Noel in the same year.

Business correspondence of Lord Wentworth, 1776-1814

**Shelfmark:** Dep. Lovelace Byron 23

**Extent:** 146 leaves

#### Scope and Content:

##### Comprising:

- (fol. 1) undated business correspondence of Lord Wentworth
- (fol. 20) letters concerning Lord Wentworth's affairs, not addressed to him, 1776-1814
- (fol. 28) official papers, 1803-1804, and (fol. 81) letters to Lord Wentworth, 1804-1806, concerning the West Leicestershire Volunteer Regiment
- (fol. 144) agreement with Thomas Gardner, architect and builder, for alterations to Kirkby Mallory house, 1788
- (fol. 146) admission of the Rev Thomas Noel to the free chapel of Fleckney, 1798

3. Strelley Hall Nottinghamshire 1789-92. Built by Thomas Gardner.

In 1789-90 Thomas Webb Edge of Strelley Hall in Nottinghamshire employed Thomas Gardner as the architect and builder when he had his home partly rebuilt incorporating parts of the old hall.



Strelley Church and Hall

The original church was built in the thirteenth century and rebuilt in the fourteenth by Sir Sampson de Strelley. The Hall we see today was built for Thomas Webb Edge by Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter between 1789 and 1793 and stands to the east of the original building which was built by Sir Sampson in 1356.

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Source: Creating Paradise: The Building of the English Country House 1660-1880 Richard Wilson, Alan Mackley 2000. Thomas Gardner built Strelley Hall 1789-1792.

all work except masonry and joinery.<sup>68</sup> Joseph Pickford (1734–1782), the leading architect in Derbyshire, trained in London as a mason and architectural draughtsman, worked under Hiorne in Derbyshire on Foremark Hall in 1759.<sup>69</sup> Thomas Gardner (c. 1737–1804) of Uttoxeter was a Pickford pupil.<sup>70</sup> He built Strelley Hall (Nottinghamshire) for Thomas Webb Edge from 1789 to 1792. The sixteenth-century hall, which had been the family seat since the 1670s and was itself a replacement for a decayed fourteenth-century house, was rebuilt in ‘plain Georgian style’. Gardner’s businesslike approach made clear the division of responsibility between himself and his employer. He contracted to build the house for £1656 18s. od., exclusive of brick, timber and floor and stair boards already sawn, laths, scaffolding, chimney-pieces, and land carriage for all materials. ‘I never include land carriage’, Gardner wrote, ‘as the party concerned has it in their power to get that done at a less expense’, presumably using estate and tenant wagons and labour. He provided an estimate of the quantity of stone required, and wrote that about 5000 cubic feet of oak timber would be needed ‘which you desired to be informed of that it might be cut down at the proper season’. He also defined how he wished to be paid: ‘In my contracts of late years I find it more convenient to receive the money as expressed – as my foreman may have it at the stated times to pay workmen etc when I am not there.’ ‘Where there is housekeeping’, he added, ‘my foreman lives in the house.’ The contract allowed for the payment of £1400 on account, in monthly payments of £100, starting in April 1790, with the balance to be paid on or before 1 January 1792 (Plates 130–31).

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Sir Nikolaus Pevsner describes Strelley as ‘a large, absolutely plain brick house seven by five bays two-and-a-half stories now all rendered (Plate 130).’<sup>71</sup> Webb Edge had gone to a Midlands architect and builder, Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter, for his plans.<sup>72</sup> Economy seems to have been Edge’s constant watchword. The old house was to be partially demolished and many materials reused.<sup>73</sup> The parts which remained were to be stuccoed to conform with the new south and east fronts. The new building included a hall, dining-, drawing- and breakfast-rooms, with chambers and attics above and a service range, but the former dining-room was to be divided to create a butler’s pantry and passages, the old staircase retained, and the truncated medieval tower converted into a study (Plate 131). The whole was to be finished ‘ready for painting’ in sixteen months. Gardner agreed to carry out all these alterations for £1656. In the event his bill came to £2763, the extras including a stables and best staircase of Stanton stone.<sup>74</sup> Since Edge supplied most of the materials the total cost of the house must have been close to £5000, or around two years of Edge’s rentals.

Strelley was far from an extravagant house: it appears not to have caused the slightest problem for Edge’s finances; it was little altered in its subsequent history.<sup>75</sup>

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rZ2DGwyd4IYC&pg=PA132&lpg=PA132&dq=thomas+gardner+architect&source=bl&ots=ftQP-F1hdh&sig=Z9Mhl2mIGEYF\\_CqLbv2gugKiHck&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiM9bH4xvjWAhUTahoKHT5EDlg4ChDoAQhIMAY#v=onepage&q=thomas%20gardner%20architect&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=rZ2DGwyd4IYC&pg=PA132&lpg=PA132&dq=thomas+gardner+architect&source=bl&ots=ftQP-F1hdh&sig=Z9Mhl2mIGEYF_CqLbv2gugKiHck&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewiM9bH4xvjWAhUTahoKHT5EDlg4ChDoAQhIMAY#v=onepage&q=thomas%20gardner%20architect&f=false)

<https://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/>



Nottinghamshire HER Name: Strelley Hall HER Number: M5270

- Listed Building (II) 5.11.4: STRELLEY HALL

## Full description

By Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter, 1789-92. In the SW corner a vaulted room, much earlier in date. The remains of a medieval tower have been incorporated here. (1)

Country house. Built 1789-92 by Thomas Gardner of Uttoxeter for Thomas Edge. Castle room, incorporating base of C13 tower, has pointed barrel vault, wall panelling C17 and C18. (2)

Strelley Hall, a Georgian building of c.1791, incorporates a medieval tower, but whether it was originally a tower house cannot now be ascertained. (3)

The seat of Thomas Webb Edge, Esq ... When I [visited,] the seat was not finished. (4)

See L2225 for earthworks.

Five letters written Thomas Gardner Uttoxeter architect and builder to Thomas Webb Edge of Strelley Hall 17 March 1786 -12 May 1792 Nottinghamshire Archives DD/E/46/58.

Since 1980 Strelley Hall has been used as office accommodation following the death of Miss E M Edge two years earlier.

Strelley Village [http://www.ilkcarn.com/Specials/Monks\\_Way/MW06.html](http://www.ilkcarn.com/Specials/Monks_Way/MW06.html)

### 4. Appleby House, Appleby Parva 1796.

In 1796 the Revd. John Moore appointed Thomas Gardner as his architect to carry out major work on his house Appleby House, Appleby Parva, Leicestershire. The Moore family were Lords of the Manor of Appleby Magna.



**APPLEBY HOUSE, c.1800, forerunner of Appleby Hall**  
detail from J Nichols' illustration *white house in Little Appleby*, opp. p 440

Revd John Moore (d.1814) and his wife Mary (d.1823), whose only child Mary Ann died in infancy in 1788, continued to live at Appleby House until their respective deaths. In 1796 major work costing £1861 was carried out to the house by Revd John Moore, using the Uttoxeter architect and builder Thomas Gardner (14). The illustration given by Nichols probably shows the house after these early alterations were made.

Source: The Moores of Appleby Parva The Heyday of the Moores at Appleby by Richard Dunmore Part 2 1751-1871.

[http://applebymagna.org.uk/appleby\\_history/in\\_focus13\\_moores\\_2.htm](http://applebymagna.org.uk/appleby_history/in_focus13_moores_2.htm)

5. Stratton Audley House, Oxfordshire. Alterations and additions for Admiral Sir J. Borlase Warren of Stapleford Hall, Nottinghamshire. Derbyshire Record Office.
6. Stainsby House, Smalley, Derbyshire. Alistair Plant in Lost Houses suggests that Thomas Gardner might have been the builder in 1790s enlarging the house by adding wings.

[https://www.countryimagesmagazine.co.uk/lost\\_houses/lost-houses-stainsby-house/](https://www.countryimagesmagazine.co.uk/lost_houses/lost-houses-stainsby-house/)

### Some sources used

Howard Colvin in A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840 published in 1978 gives a list of the works of Thomas Gardner. He quotes from Edward Saunders, Francis Redfern History of Uttoxeter 1865 and sources at Staffordshire Record Office, Lichfield Record Office, Derbyshire Record Office and Notts. County Record Office.

Edward Saunders article Doveridge Hall in Derbyshire Life August 1972 and from his book Joseph Pickford of Derby, A Georgian Architect published in 1993. Edward Saunders who was an architect in Derby seems to be the most quoted source. Edward Saunders also published The Villas and town houses of Joseph Pickford 1736-82.

The Life of Josiah Wedgwood from his private correspondence and family papers with an introductory sketch of the art of pottery in England v. 2 / by Eliza Meteyard. 1866.

My Owen Story The Autobiography of a Child Mary Howitt. 1845 also online.

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A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 8. Originally published by Victoria County History, London, 1963.

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Find My Past

Family Search

THE 'CELEBRATED AND INGENIOUS MR JOSEPH PICKFORD'

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Jim Foley 2020